

## Against the Grain

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Volume 22 | Issue 2

Article 36

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April 2010

# Something to Think About -- Gifting is a Gift

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### Recommended Citation

(Tinker) Massey, Mary E. (2010) "Something to Think About -- Gifting is a Gift," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 22: Iss. 2, Article 36.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.5525>

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it was, too. He happens to be an RN but not a real nurse, as he puts it, but a "psych" nurse. Other nurses always seem very impressed about it, however.

Everyone always thinks they will get all the books read they put aside, but really when you are recovering from anything, you simply haven't the wherewithal to do much of that. I read some of the things I wanted to but started and stopped more than I read. I don't think librarians are any better than any other recovering people in this regard. I did enjoy round-the-clock access to **TCM** — something I've long desired and have often envied my retired friends for having. Whole days of **Bette Davis**, **Ginger Rogers** and **Fred Astaire**, **Hitchcock**, **Film Noir** — I had enough of an attention span for that essentially passive activity.

My last column was about writing a procedures manual and I feel like a broken record — boy, that makes me sound old — but manuals are really useful when key employees are gone. I think having had the experience of a medical leave for surgery or an illness makes you more cognizant of the realities of employees in these situations. As a supervisor I feel the experience is such an asset. Even though university regulations and law limit what any supervisor can do, just having experienced it makes you realize things will go on without you or any other particular person for a while. 🍷

## Something to Think About — Gifting is a Gift

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In these tough economic times, we have cut after cut in our budgets. Results: there are fewer books, media and serials that can be bought and we get further behind in being able to fulfill the needs of the patrons using our libraries. We tend to the basic needs, looking for issues and volumes to fill our missing periodical ranks. We hope for the classic books to be donated from a concerned patron or alumnus. We can't really order items from our unknown donors, but sometimes we can lay the groundwork for specific donations. We have a number of people come by the library or call on the phone and they like to start with a declaration of how much they have to donate and how great the condition of the material. You want to jump up and say yes we'll accept anything, but the truth is, we have to be careful of what and how we accept donations. There should be an agreement that states the material will be given freely, but if we can't use it, we would be able to dispose of it as we wish (trade the material with other institutions, substitute new issues for old, utilize to trade for issues being purchased through another agency,

or just recycle). This gives us the ability to utilize donated materials more efficiently.

I had one faculty member who donated a complete run of a technical journal title that allowed us to switch out our older used issues for the new ones. The older ones were still good enough to ship to a back issue agency where we established credit and we're able to purchase issues we need at half price. Another retired alumnus brought a number of titles to us. When we checked our titles, they were scattered and tattered. I invited the gentleman into our binding area where we allowed him to choose the color of the binding that would be used and we told him when they would be bound. He visited us the next year to see the results and was very proud. We can help people make the decisions to gift us with good material and sometimes very special materials. Frequently it is an accident that donors show up at the right time or gift us with the appropriate materials that will continue to enhance our collection for years to come. Sometimes we can't even use the materials being

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# Library Perspective, Vendor Response



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**Column Editors' Note:** *This column for **Against the Grain** is devoted to discussing issues affecting library acquisitions, library vendors, and the services and products they supply to academic libraries and the publishing marketplace as a whole. It is an ongoing conversation between a book vendor representative, **Robin Champieux** and an academic librarian, **Steven Carrico**. — RC and SC*

**Robin:** In our last column, we touched upon emerging acquisition and access models. Let's follow-up on that. As you know, I recently joined **EBL**, an eBook aggregator that offers a patron driven model. But I am more interested in discussing this from a wider perspective. What advantages do these untraditional and new models offer, and where do they fall short?

**Steve:** As an academic librarian may I suggest something to publishers and eBook aggregators that they're going to love to hear? With so many academic libraries facing restrictive book budgets, isn't it time eBook providers begin offering eBooks within a more reasonable cost-benefit scale? For that matter, why should libraries pay full-price for resources that are hardly, if ever, used? Wouldn't it be great if eBook providers offered a "money-back guarantee" where after a year any purchased eBooks with less than say two uses — not just views but real uses — could be returned back to the publishers? Like that would happen!

**Robin:** Well, I know you're being a bit cheeky, but I understand where you are coming from. I think you are saying that the dominant acquisition models don't address library needs and budgets. And, publishers and aggregators need to offer something more relevant. Right?

**Steve:** Absolutely! By creating new, more flexible models of acquisitions, book vendors and publishers will get libraries to purchase

more eBooks than they do now. It will make better sense to spend their money on online publications that can be shared. Thus, libraries will increasingly focus their budgets around these models of acquisitions. If not, it's going to be a case of killing the goose that laid the golden egg.

**Robin:** I don't think most publishers and aggregators are opposed to experimenting with new ideas, but they would insist on models that also address their business interests. I don't believe this is unreasonable as long as those interests are reasonable. To pose a related question, how do you think libraries need to work differently to respond successfully to patron expectations and needs in the face of dissipating budgets? I believe exploring this question is also important, because what you describe above also calls into question traditional collection development methods, such as approval plans, which do not include criteria like circulation expectation. Moreover, there are loud and thoughtful voices in the library community — both libraries and publishers — that have argued for the importance of seminal works and collections of record, wherein use is not a defining feature of value. Finding business and acquisition models that address these different interests is important. For instance, if publishers agreed to the model you propose above, I predict that they would begin to value circulation predictions over scholarly impact when choosing what to publish. Is this what we want?

**Steve:** It's an interesting dilemma, for sure — I guess the ideal libraries strive for is to offer scholarly collection building AND high circulation. Unfortunately, that is the exception, not the rule. But, **Robin**, even when we are talking about scholarly content that is of high use sometimes the acquisitions models being offered to libraries aren't helping the situation. Let's face it, many academic libraries' budgets are consumed by ongoing subscriptions and license agreements, so there is less "discretionary" funds to spend on books. This is certainly the case in my library. So to meet demands of users and spend our money more prudently, we are pushing the acquisitions of eBooks and are hoping to partner with libraries in our state consortia to share these eBooks. At the risk of being cheeky again, here's the problem reflective of the publishers threatening the goose. We asked a vendor rep to build a shared eBook plan around titles offered by a very prominent university press, but we were told that the press is reluctant to accept our consortia's buying one eBook and sharing it with all the libraries' users. Why? Because the folks running the press believe this model would cut down on multiple copy sales of that title across the state. I find that logical but shortsighted. Instead, aggregators working with the press could ask each library in the consortia to provide the individual amounts they spent in the previous year on books issued from that university press. Each library could pool those funds into a deposit account then

select and share eBooks from the press until the account is emptied. In this scenario the libraries would acquire more titles for their users, their funds would go further, and the press still receives a healthy profit, since libraries are spending as much as they would have anyway. But now the libraries are vested and roll this plan into their annual budgets... Whether this model is sustainable is not my point. What I'm suggesting is these are the types of flexible models that need to be tried.

**Robin:** I absolutely agree and like what you propose above. At first glance, I think it's viable and acknowledges the publishers' interests. There needs to be more open and honest dialogue between vendors and libraries so new kinds of models like this can be proposed and piloted.

**Steve:** To their credit, eBook suppliers have developed the patron-driven purchase plans, and this acquisitions model is becoming widely used and accepted in libraries. It's a simple idea but effective — users drive the purchasing-mobile.

**Robin:** Obviously, you know where I fall on the topic of patron-driven acquisitions. I believe we will see even more development in this area, especially as a greater number of libraries incorporate this model into their acquisitions workflows and purchase plans mature. I'm curious. I know UF recently piloted a patron-driven program. What motivated the libraries to test this model, what were the results, and how to you think the experience will influence collection development and acquisition processes moving forward?

**Steve:** Based on everything I've read and presentations given from librarians and vendors on their experiences with patron-driven acquisitions, I'd agree with you — this is a model that will continue to be used increasingly by libraries and their consortia. At UF we ran a six-month pilot project using the **MyiLibrary** platform, but it wasn't launched until after our librarians had a long debate on the pros and cons of allowing patrons to determine acquisitions purchases. What swayed the vote to begin a pilot was curiosity — many librarians were anxious to see the type of eBooks patrons would use. Of course the patrons didn't know their use was triggering purchases. The high usage of the eBooks was amazing, and my administration viewed the pilot as a success, if for no other reason than knowing eBooks purchased through this patron-driven initiative were used. It makes Admin most upset to see studies showing how many books in library stacks are never used. They see it as a waste of money, and questions begin to creep up about our selection processes and ability to ascertain patron demand... It can get very uncomfortable at collection meetings.

**Robin:** Yes, I've heard similar feedback from other institutions. I think those uncomfortable meetings and conversations are important, however. You mention that UF's experience has brought up questions about the Library's

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offered because we already have a jillion copies of those titles. I don't stop there, because you will never get anything else offered from those or related sources.

As in the case of our latest prospective donor, a retired General in California, I spent about thirty minutes finding him two academic libraries that were willing to accept his donations and he was very happy. Our job is not always to just say yes or no, but to offer some alternatives for our generous donors. A little work and compassion for others goes a long way in promoting future gifts which might even involve estate gifts. I believe this is truly something to think hard about! Build your public relations and they will take care of you later. It's a gift! 🌱